



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE NATIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN

*By Jacinto Lopez, Editor of "La Reforma Social;" author
"The War on the Pacific" and many essays on
American and International Questions*

The subject matter assigned to me easily lends itself to an extensive and elaborate discourse on the geographical, historical and political aspects of the relation of the United States to the Caribbean Sea. But this would not meet my purpose. In coming to this conference, I have a more impersonal and far reaching interest. I have come here to make a faithful exposition of facts and to state a few plain truths in connection with a question which is of the utmost importance for the destinies of the American Continent. I have come here with the purpose of rendering, if it is in my power, a service to those ideals of right, justice, and international good faith and good will which should control, as principles of action, the policy of the great and the small powers.

The policy of the United States in the Latin American Continent is carried out without the knowledge of the American people whose interest in these matters has not as yet been aroused. The American people are too busy with domestic questions at home and with European questions abroad. The public pays no attention to affairs in Central and South America. The government is thus free to act without any check and without any sense of responsibility. The government carries forward its policies in Latin America even against the expressed disapproval of Congress. The situation thus created is one of force, pure and simple. It is the dictatorial use of overwhelming might in countries too weak and distressed to think even of resistance. In this arbitrary way, the President of the United States, whoever he may be, disposes of the fortunes and shapes the

destinies of the small countries bordering on the Caribbean Sea, according to his own and exclusive personal will; without a consistent and deliberate policy, without any knowledge or any comprehension of the peoples of those countries, their problems, their needs, their woes, their aspirations; without any regard for international law; sometimes violating even the very elements of Christian civilization. His sole inspiration is that of the old Roman patriotism.

The unbridled and unaccountable freedom of action of the President of the United States in the countries of the Caribbean, the supreme dictatorship which he exerts over those lands, through both the great moral authority as well as the naval power of the United States, fearless of the ultimate sanction of public opinion at home—because the American people are entirely unaware of and entirely indifferent to the events in a region which is, however, so intimately connected with the most vital interests of the United States—this is one of the things that impress and surprise us Latin Americans. We are more deeply and painfully impressed because we admire and love this country and fervently believe that it has a civilizing mission to fulfill in the world at large, but especially and particularly in Latin America.

The century old struggle with Great Britain for the control of the Isthmian routes; the unflinching policy of the United States throughout the nineteenth century with regard to the Island of Cuba; the war of 1898 for the expulsion of Spain from the remaining strongholds of her American empire, testify to the paramount concern and interest of the United States in the Caribbean waters and lands. This interest is manifold. It is commercial, political and strategic. It is inseparable from the national security of the United States. This wide area of waters is the natural outlet for the foreign trade of the United States with the West Indies and with the South American countries. In the policy of the government of the United States, the Panama Canal is considered as a part of the coast line of the United States. We can, therefore, imagine with all its imponderable significance, a continuous coast line ex-

tending from the northwestern frontier of the United States down to and through the Panama Canal, and therefrom up to the northeastern frontier embracing within it the whole of Central America, the Danish Islands, Cuba, Haiti or Santo Domingo and Porto Rico. The continental shore line of South America, from the mouth of the Orinoco River to the Yucatan Channel, completes the land boundaries of the Caribbean Sea on the South and West. The Platt amendment; the Panama Canal and its history since the government of the United States decided on an American Canal under American control; the events of November, 1903, which resulted in the secession of Panama from Colombia and the treaty of 1904 with the new republic by which the United States became the sovereign of the Canal; the policy of the United States government in Central America since 1910, taking the Republic of Nicaragua as a starting point or an entering wedge; the purchase of the Danish Islands, made possible by the Great War and its economic consequences in the mother country; and finally the policy of the United States government in Haiti and Santo Domingo in 1915 and 1916, likewise favored by the Great War, are but manifestations of the supremely controlling interest of the United States in the Caribbean.

The imperialistic expansion of the United States since 1898 is altogether in this magnificent area. Look at the long line of islands stretching down from Key West to Port of Spain. The United States has a footing everywhere. From Guantanamo, the United States can control the windward passage between Cuba and the Dominican Republic. From Porto Rico the United States can control the Mona Passage. Haiti and Santo Domingo are under the direct control of the United States since 1915 and 1916 and each has a harbor of first class importance for a naval station, Mole St. Nicholas and Samana Bay; the former commanding the eastern side of the Windward passage, and the latter commanding the Mona passage from the west. The treaty with Nicaragua gives the United States possession of the Great Corn and Little Corn Islands off the east coast of this republic together with the right to build a naval base

on the Gulf of Fonseca. St. Thomas has a splendid harbor for a naval station too. Colon and the fortifications of the Canal, the Canal itself, which has become the center of the naval power of the United States, complete the picture of the southward progress of the United States in its march of expansion in the Mediterranean of the New World, which has thus become an American domain, the *Mare Nostrum* of the United States. Add to this the United States navy, and we can have an idea of the amount of independence of the sovereign nations bordering on the Caribbean. In this way we can at the same time have an idea, in a general sense, of the actual situation in the Caribbean world. The United States is today the supreme lord of the Caribbean and the whole question is what use does it make or is it going to make of its power and how is it going to improve its opportunities?

We all know the story of Panama. We all know how the present position of the United States in that most important spot in the world was attained. We all know that the American people did not approve the Roosevelt policy in this matter; but what is not so well known is that the nature of the procedure of the United States government in Nicaragua and San Domingo is similar to that which was followed in Panama. It was by force that the United States government prevented Colombia from maintaining its integrity. It was by force that the United States government established in San Domingo in 1916 an American military government. It was by force that the United States government obtained in Nicaragua in 1914 rights and privileges that practically destroyed the political existence of that country as a sovereign nation and impaired the independence of each and all the remaining four Central American republics. It is by force that the conditions and the situation thus created in those countries are maintained.

In San Domingo, a regularly constituted government, headed by an unimpeachable man, was overthrown by the American marines, simply because that man, true to his duty, to his oath, to his conscience, to his country, stubbornly refused to affix his signature to a treaty handing over to the United States the sovereignty of the republic.

In Nicaragua, the United States government gave its support to an armed uprising against the central government. The revolution was entirely justified and deserved the sympathy of liberty-loving men everywhere. But after the war was over it was seen that its leaders were willing to pay a prohibitive price for the help received from the United States government and without which they would not have succeeded. Soon after the organization of the new régime the chief of the Latin American division of the department of state, Mr. Dawson, made his appearance at Managua, Nicaragua, and served notice upon President Estrada that his government would not be recognized by the United States government except upon the acceptance by him of the following conditions: the negotiation of a fifty million dollar loan through the intervention of the United States government, and the control of the custom houses of the republic by the United States as security for the loan. Everything was granted, but the American Congress denied its approval to this pact.

The note in which the revolutionary government of Nicaragua asked the United States to render it the service of entering with it into a contract for the management of the custom houses and the placing of the loan, was written by Mr. Dawson himself, and he opposed even the slightest alteration suggested by the Nicaraguan minister of foreign affairs. Notwithstanding the refusal of Congress, the American government persisted in its Nicaraguan policy and a new arrangement was made by which a New York banking concern made to the government of Nicaragua a loan amounting to \$1,500,000 and later a further amount of \$755,000. Since then the custom houses have been in the hands of these New York bankers. Meanwhile, the principal leaders of the successful revolution, five in number, made an agreement with Mr. Dawson providing that the nomination for president of the republic should fall exclusively upon one of their group of five. There was a violent reaction against this trend of events. The minister of war, General Mena, rebelled. The provisional president lost no time in asking the intervention of the United States govern-

ment to put down the rebellion. He wanted the United States to protect with its forces all the inhabitants of the republic including the protection of his own government, which for all practical purposes from that moment had ceased to exist. American troops were landed and for the first time in the history of the continent the government of the United States took sides with its military forces in the civil strife of an American country in favor of a government which had declared its impotency to rule. Later on this same government, thus saved and backed by the United States government, made a treaty with the government to which it owed its existence, establishing an American protectorate over the republic. This treaty failed in the Senate of the United States and a new treaty was submitted in 1914, which was approved in 1916, this time without the provision of the protectorate plan. By this convention the United States paid to the government of Nicaragua three million dollars in return for the following concessions: the right to construct a trans-isthmian canal by the Nicaraguan route or any other route in the territory of Nicaragua; and the control by lease for ninety-nine years of Great Corn and Little Corn Islands and of a naval base in the Gulf of Fonseca. The United States has the option to renew the lease for a similar further period.

Costa Rica, Honduras and Salvador protested to the United States against this treaty on the ground that it was destructive of their independence as sovereign states and contrary to their most vital interests. A canal through the Nicaraguan route cannot be built without the consent of Costa Rica which possesses proprietary rights over part of the territory in the region of the San Juan River: and moreover Nicaragua was forbidden by treaty to enter into any agreement whatsoever for the opening of the canal without Costa Rica concurring in the compact. Costa Rica and Salvador, each acting separately, brought suit against Nicaragua in the Central American Court of Justice, established under the Washington Convention for the judicial settlement of all disputes between the five republics. The government of Costa Rica in March, 1916, asked the court

to declare that under the Canas-Jerez Treaty, the Cleveland Laudo and the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1907, the government of Nicaragua had no right to enter with the United States or any other power into an agreement such as the Bryan-Chamorro treaty; and that, therefore, this treaty was null and of no value. On its part the government of Salvador, on August, 1916, petitioned the court to issue a writ ordering the government of Nicaragua to abstain from executing the Bryan-Chamorro treaty.

The government of Salvador alleged that the Bryan-Chamorro treaty violated the rights of Salvador in the Gulf of Fonseca and imperilled its independence and national existence; that said treaty infringed, moreover, the rights of Salvador under Articles III and IX of the Washington Convention of 1907. In December, 1916, the court decided in favor of Costa Rica, supporting in every point the position taken by her as complainant against Nicaragua; and in March, 1919, the court passed judgment equally favorable in the case of Salvador versus Nicaragua, and declared that the Nicaraguan government was under obligations to reestablish the status quo which existed between the three republics prior to the Bryan-Chamorro treaty.

Did Nicaragua obey the sentence of the International Judicial Court of Central America established under the Washington Convention to which Nicaragua was a party in common with the other Central American republics? The practical result was that Nicaragua withdrew her representative in the court; and that the court, the first institution of its kind in the world, the greatest achievement of civilization in our day in America as an agency of peace and justice, passed away and exists no longer. The Bryan-Chamorro treaty has no standing in international law. It is inimical to the most vital interests of the Central American republics. It is in conflict with previous treaties already in force. It was made with a government set up and kept up by the United States government, a government that has no power or authority to make a treaty of such a nature. The people of Nicaragua have not been consulted, notwithstanding the fact that that treaty makes renuncia-

tion of sovereign rights that no nation can make without committing suicide. Elihu Root publicly stated that the treaty should not be made with the existing government of Nicaragua but with a representative government. But a representative government would never make such a treaty. This treaty has disturbed the good relations of peace and friendship and mutual confidence between the five Central American republics. The government of Nicaragua is by them considered as playing the rôle of Judas. And if there has not been a coalition of the other four republics to remove it and bring Nicaragua back into the Central American family of sister republics it is only because that government is under the protection of the United States which supports it against the will of the Nicaraguan people. It was in fear of a Central American crusade to liberate Nicaragua from that government that the protectorate idea was put into the treaty of 1914 with the United States.

The people of the Dominican Republic, the government of which was by force supplanted in November, 1916, by an American military government, has ever since that fateful day been under martial law. Justice even in civil matters is administered there by the provost marshal. There is a censorship of the press compared to which the methods of the Russian czar were an ideal example of liberalism and wisdom. There is a system of repression by the application of corporal punishments so cruel and so inhuman that you would feel inclined, I am sure, to think it unbelievable. They imprison the people without any process of law. They chase the people in the country as if they were savage beasts. Torments or tortures of various forms, that of the water and that of the rope, for instance, are practiced. Now the people of that republic are a civilized Christian people. It can be said that San Domingo is the cradle of Christian civilization in America. What is their crime? What have they done? These people have always been most friendly to the United States. The treaty of 1907 with the United States government was made to preserve their independence and sovereignty. By this

treaty the Dominican people occupy a singular position in relation to the United States which was to act and is acting as a trustee for them before the creditor nations. The reason alleged for invading their country and subjugating them is that there was at the time a civil war. There is so far as I know no reason put forth for treating them as the Germans themselves have not been treated. After all that how can they believe in civilization? It is in the name of civilization that they have been crushed as a nation and oppressed and terrorized as if we were not living in the twentieth century but three or four centuries ago.

I was in Cuba in 1916. I witnessed the presidential elections of November of that year. There was a landslide for the candidate of the Liberal Party. The defeated candidate was the president himself who had run for re-election, a word that has a sinister significance in Latin American politics and Latin American history. Reëlection means there usurpation and usurpation means revolution or civil war. This is invariably the rule in those countries and it did not fail this time in Cuba. History repeated itself in 1916 in the Pearl of the Antilles. The man in the presidential chair was most unwilling to submit to the verdict of the people and through the most scandalous expedients carried on his determination to keep himself in office for another four years. There was of course a revolution. Revolution in Cuba means intervention by the United States. Washington intervened in effect but did it to put down the revolution and uphold the usurpation. Revolution is an unpardonable crime in the eyes of Washington which has no eyes for usurpation.

From November when the elections were held, to February, when the coup d'état took place, there was plenty of time and opportunity for the United States government to exert its moral influence and prevent a catastrophe. Had the least effort been made to do so, the sad events of February, 1917, in Cuba could have been easily averted. The experience of 1905 had shown a defect in the Platt amendment. It was not preventive. It did not come into action until after the consummation of the facts. This most val-

uable lesson was disregarded in 1916-1917. Measures could have been taken and should have been taken then and there to avoid the revolution of 1917. The way to avoid the revolution was to make the usurpation impossible. And with a single word whispered by the American minister at Havana, in the ear of President Menocal, the people of Cuba would have been spared the bloodshed, the destruction of property, the disorder and the discredit incident to the coup d'état. It is our opinion that the Platt amendment was conceived with the purpose, in part, to save Cuba from the cancer that has eaten into the Latin American republics, despotic government. By article III of the Platt amendment, the United States has the right to intervene to maintain a government which will protect liberty. Liberty was killed in Cuba in 1917 and a despotic government arose from the official conspiracy to defeat the will of the people as expressed in the elections of November, 1916. Why did Washington permit this thing to happen? And it would not have been possible but for the line of action taken by Washington. The revolution would have deposed the usurper, had it not been for the protection of Washington and the decidedly hostile attitude assumed by it toward the revolution. Evidently Washington failed in its duty. It should have prevented the conflict. It should have by all means seen to it that a representative government was maintained in Cuba in that emergency. As it was, democracy was destroyed in Cuba in 1917 and Washington was primarily responsible for it. There is no popular government in Cuba today and the outlook is very dark. How is representative government to be reestablished in Cuba?

The revolutions in Latin America are movements of freedom. They are consistently made against despotic governments. The aspiration to liberty thus expressed is seldom realized but failure never kills the will to be free, and so long as despotism exists, so long the aspiration to liberty will fight for its extermination. This is the secret of the endless civil wars in those countries. It is this state of things which creates the opportunity and affords the pretext for action by the United States of the sort we have seen in

reviewing the situation in Central America, San Domingo and Cuba.

Notice that intervention never happens when despotism is in peaceful control. It commences to threaten the very moment there is an uprising against it. Revolutions are the explanation and the justification of the presence of an American military government in San Domingo. A revolution is the explanation of the Panama treaty. A revolution is the explanation of the Bryan-Chamorro treaty. The conclusion is that the struggle for liberty, for good and representative government, in short, for democracy, leads to foreign servitude and that those people in order to preserve their nationalities should keep quiet and get along the best they can under despotism, no matter how cruel and destructive it may be.

Nearly every Latin American nation has passed through the dark age of despotism and revolution. Argentina is the most striking example. Chili had presidential dictators until 1892. And many of them, the great majority, have succeeded in the struggle for freedom and have established stable and strong governments. The policy observed by the United States in Nicaragua, for instance, would have made this process impossible and civilization would have been the loser.

Those countries have a right to live, deserve to live and must live. Because they have not as yet achieved stability, they should not be absorbed and submerged. Nations very much older and larger than they are still solving the problem of self-government and internal peace. No great European power would even think of taking advantage of the conditions in which Russia and Germany find themselves today in order to exact from them concessions that would forever undermine their status of sovereign and independent nations. The greatest of all wars in all the centuries was fought by the greatest of all powers in order to preserve the independence and sovereign existence of the small nations of Europe.

It is our belief that in the existing situation in the Caribbean, the United States has a noble and superior mission

to fulfill. It consists in helping the nations of the Caribbean to enter definitely into the path of political development. This should be done in a friendly, generous way, with no selfish aims. The fundamental principle of action of this mission should be the preservation of the territorial integrity, and the independence and the sovereignty of those nations. Here is an opportunity for the United States to render civilization a service of first magnitude. How it should or could be done is not for me to discuss on this occasion. I know it can be done. I know it should be done. The United States already is the overlord in the Caribbean. There is no fear of any international political rivalry in this region. The future of the world is not to lie in warfare but in peace. Disarmament will become more and more imperative every day. The hunt for naval bases and positions of commercial advantage should not be carried so far as to trespass moral and political boundaries which are really inviolable if we are to live in a civilized world. Naval bases and new fields for commercial expansion should not be acquired at the price of the integrity, the independence and the sovereignty of small and defenseless nations which love their individuality and are loath to part with it. All those people of the Caribbean Seas have the sentiment of nationality. They believe in their own destiny. They hate foreign domination. In this very month of May several thousand Panamanians, the very people of the so-called revolution of November, 1903, marched through the streets of their city in a torch light parade as a protest against the acquisition by the United States of the major portion of Taboga Island for fortification as a part of the Pacific defense scheme of the Panama Canal. An automobile in which General Pershing was driving to a ball in his honor, was halted by the procession and forced to return to his hotel.

These countries are immensely rich. They have enormous possibilities. The extraordinary increase of their commerce in recent years, which is mainly carried on with the United States, shows their importance. They constitute in themselves an empire. They deserve to live. They have the will to live.

The power of the United States is in itself so great that all the other nations of the Caribbean are powerless against it. In this sense their independence is already inevitably restricted. There is no possibility that any one of them or all of them combined would be able to act contrary to the interests of the United States, but their rights as nations should be strictly recognized and respected and their internal problems should be viewed sympathetically and with a spirit of intelligence and disinterested coöperation.